DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 241 180 PS 014 237

AUTHOR Murphy, Jo-Anne
TITLE The Development of a Support Group and Network for the Parents of Special Needs Children.
INSTITUTION Nova Univ., Fort Lauderdale. Center for the Advancement of Education.
PUB DATE Mar 83
NOTE 81p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Disabilities; Elementary School Students; *Parent Education; *Parent School Relationship; Practicums; Public Schools; Questionnaires; *Social Support Groups; *Special Education; *Workshops

ABSTRACT

The practicum described in this report addressed the expressed need and desire of parents of special needs children in Marblehead Massachusetts to participate in a support group to help solve mutual problems and discuss shared frustrations. A series of four workshops for parents was developed. Goals of the practicum were (1) to have parents take over the management and direction of the group; (2) to improve communications between the school system and the parents by having school staff present information at scheduled workshops; and (3) to have parents reach out to one another and establish their own network of individual support. Of the parents who attended the workshops, more than 75 percent indicated that these goals were met, decided to continue the group, and stated that the meetings were very successful. (Author/RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED241180

Center for the Advancement of Education

PRACTICUM REPORT

Ed.D. Program in
Early and Middle Childhood

NOVA UNIVERSITY
3301 College Ave.
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

BY: JoAnn Murphy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Jo-Anne Murphy
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS 014237

Nova University
3301 COLLEGE AVENUE, FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33314

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SUPPORT GROUP AND NETWORK FOR THE PARENTS OF SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

PRACTICUM I REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

JO-ANNE MURPHY

PS 014237

NOVA UNIVERSITY - CLUSTER 11

MARCH 1983

OBSERVER: Mrs. Janice Carbo
Director of Special Education
Marblehead Public Schools
2 Humphrey Street
Marblehead, Massachusetts 01945

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Table of Contents	ii-iii
Abstract	iv
Chapter One - The Introduction	
The Community	1-2
Writer's Role, Responsibilities, and the Work Setting	2-5
Chapter Two - Study of the Problem	
Description of the Problem Situation and the Problem Statement	6
Evidence of the Problem	7-9
Causes of the Problem	9-12
Related Literature	12-17
Chapter Three - Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments	
General Goals	18-19
Behavior Expected, Assessment Instruments, and Standard of Performance	19-24
Chapter Four - Solution Selected and Implementation	25-27
Chapter Five - Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations	28-47
Reference List	48
Bibliography	49-50
Appendices	
Appendix A: Cover Letter to Parents	51
Appendix B: Questionnaire for Determining Subject Matter of Workshops	52-52
Appendix C: Letter of Invitation/ Announcement of Workshops	54

Appendix D:	Newspaper Announcements of Workshops	55
Appendix E:	Agenda for Workshop #1	56
Appendix F:	Agenda for Workshop #2	57
Appendix G:	Agenda for Workshop #3	58
Appendix H:	Agenda for Workshop #4	59
Appendix I:	Key Terms in Behavior Modification - Passout for Workshop #2	60-61
Appendix J:	Newspaper Announcement on Formation of Support Group	62
Appendix K:	Survey for Workshop #1	63
Appendix L:	Survey for Workshop #2	64
Appendix M:	Survey for Workshop #3	65
Appendix N:	Survey for Workshop #4	66
Appendix O:	Overall Survey for Workshops	67-68
Appendix P:	Letter of Acknowledgement to Participating Staff	69
Appendix Q:	Letter of Commendation from Special Education Director	70

ABSTRACT

The Development of a Support Group and Network For the Parents of Special Needs Children
Murphy, Jo-Anne, 1983: Practicum Report, Nova University Ed.D Early Childhood Program
Descriptors: Support Groups/Special Needs Children/Parent Education

This practicum addressed the expressed need and desire of the parents of special needs children to participate in a support group and network to help solve mutual problems and discuss mutual frustrations.

The writer, a special needs professional, developed a series of four workshops for parents. The author hoped that the parents would find the program so enjoyable and beneficial that they would decide to continue the group.

The writer's goals were: 1. to have parents continue and take over the management and direction of the group; 2. to improve communications between the school system and the parents by having them meet a variety of school staff through their presentations at the workshops; and 3. to have parents reach out to one another and establish their own network of individual support.

Of the parents who attended the workshops, more than 75% indicated that these goals were met, decided to continue the group, and stated that the meetings were very successful.

Chapter One - The Introduction

A. The Community

The town of Marblehead is a picturesque, quaint community located fifteen miles north of Boston on the Atlantic seacoast of Massachusetts. As in many seacoast communities, fishing is the major industry and sail-making is a second major industry. Due to its quaintness and proximity to the sea, as well as to its historical background, tourism is another important industry during the summer months.

"Old Town", the section of town that dates back to the Revolutionary War, is located along the harbor. It is filled with little shops, restaurants and studios which carry the products created by the large artist population that resides here. The homes, built in the early 1700's, are very close together, and are lined along the narrow, winding cobblestone streets framing the harbor. Recently many of these homes have been converted to apartments and condominiums. This area is reminiscent of the era where the horse was the common mode of transportation.

The remainder of the town is a typical suburban, affluent, white-collar community with single family homes along tree-shaded streets that are valued from $75,000 to $250,000. There is also a small island

joined by a causeway to the main section of the town called "The Neck". Homes here are valued typically above $250,000.

The town has three yacht clubs which draw during the summer season, sailing and racing enthusiasts, fishermen, and other vacationers that enjoy the sea.

1981 places the year-round population of the town at just over 20,000, and its area encompasses 4.4 square miles.

B. Writer's Role, Responsibilities and the Work Setting

The town department which is allocated the most funding is the school department. There are currently five elementary schools (K-5), one middle school (6-8), and a four-year high school (9-12). The latest (1981-1982) total enrollment is 3,105 students (K-5, 1,061; 6-8, 849; and 9-12, 1,195). These figures were also found in The Annual Town Report of 1981.

There is a superintendent of schools, and a School Board comprised of five elected members who control the policies and fiscal matters of the school system.

Because of Massachusetts Public Law 766, which calls for adequate and appropriate education for all special needs children, and the new federal law 94-142, the education for all handicapped children act, each elementary school has a resource teacher, the middle school has two resource teachers, and the high school also has two

resource teachers. These teachers work with children who can be mainstreamed into regular classes for at least forty per cent of the week and who spend varying amounts of time in a resource room. These students may have learning disabilities, emotional or behavioral disorders, physical disabilities, or may be slow learners, all of which make some modification of regular education necessary. There are also five classes from pre-school through high school that service more severe special needs students. These are called resource classes and are self-contained and taught by resource class teachers.

The remaining Special Education staff is comprised of two elementary counselors in the elementary schools, who also serve as Child Study Team Chairpeople, a kinesiologist, an occupational therapist and a school psychologist to service the entire school population. The town has had a Special Education Director for two years, and the department and programs have grown dramatically under her supervision. The middle school and the high school each have a special educator in the role of Child Study Team Chairperson.

The writer is a resource teacher in one of the elementary schools in the district, and has held that position for the past five years. The duties of the resource teacher include sitting on the Child Study Team, doing diagnostic testing and report writing for children

referred for a Core Evaluation, writing goals and objectives for Individual Educational Plans, teaching in the resource room, and performing the role of generic specialist in helping the classroom teacher adapt curriculum and materials to accomodate the special education children mainstreamed into their classrooms for some period of time. It is also the role of the resource teacher to set up and maintain good lines of communication between the parents of the children he/she services, the classroom teachers, and the administrators in the system. Written quarterly reports are mandated, and two parent conferences are suggested. It is not unusual in the case of more severely impaired children to have daily written reports and monthly meetings.

Because the parents of the community are generally well educated, they expect a superior quality education for their children and exert more critical involvement than some of the larger and less affluent neighboring communities where the author has also taught. The parents expect their teachers to be highly motivated, and to keep up with current trends and innovations in education.

Perhaps because of the higher than average socio-economic profile and the level of education of its citizens, the pressure is great on the children of Marblehead to meet and exceed the successes of their parents

both educationally and socially. Performance from the beginning grades is often aimed towards ultimate acceptance to an Ivy or other prestigious college. The vast majority of children go on to further their educations upon graduation from high school.

Preliminary feedback given to the author may indicate that this highly competitive atmosphere makes school even more difficult for the special needs child, and because of the mores of the community it makes parenting the special needs child even more discouraging and frustrating.

Chapter Two - Study of the Problem

A. Description of the Problem Situation and the Problem Statement:

In today's society parenting has become an increasingly more difficult job. Add to this difficult endeavor a child who has special needs such as emotional or behavioral problems, learning difficulties, a physical disability, or perhaps a combination of problems, and the role of parent becomes even more difficult. Now place such a child in a school within a community which expects, in fact demands, excellence in scholarship, and where there are highly competitive peers and families. This adds to what may be an almost insurmountable burden still another pressure with which the parents must deal. At the very least, parenting this child who may be different, has become a very lonely endeavor. The children themselves have turned to the guidance counselor or the resource teacher for aid and support in dealing with these frustrations.

There is no forum or support group for the parents of special needs children in Marblehead. Parents have felt isolated in raising their special needs children. Isolation from other parents with similar problems, and from additional support persons other than the resource teacher servicing their child.

B. Evidence of the Problem:

Resource teachers have been increasingly frustrated in their attempts to have parents "follow through" with programs in the home, especially programs set up around behavior modification. The child has performed well in the school situation under exacting rules set up by the resource teacher. But when school is out parents all too frequently haven't followed through with their children successfully. Perhaps if the parents had been given a better understanding of the program these unhappy and undesirable situations would have been eleviated, and the program would have been reinforced at home.

Parents have come to the researcher and other resource teachers asking them for strategies and help with their children not just in academic areas but in social-emotional areas as well. Parents have also shared with the resource teachers their feelings of isolation.

Because of these queries, the author devised a questionnaire to determine the problems and concerns experienced by the parents of special needs children and distributed it to all the elementary schools and the middle school. The survey also served to identify which specific problems were causing the most concern. It further indicated that many parents were interested in attending a series of workshops to explore their

concerns (See Appendices A and B).

The results were used to set up a series of four workshops, each dealing with a different expressed concern or problem. It is hoped that these would act as the first step in establishing an ongoing organization.

There were a total of 124 questionnaires sent out. Of the 48 returned, 42 indicated their interest in attending the workshops. Although signing the questionnaire was optional, approximately three-fourths of the respondents did. This enabled the researcher to determine who the students were and therefore the extent of the problems of the special needs children. The majority of the parents who signed the questionnaires had children with more severe needs (emotional disorders, behavioral disorders, multi-faceted problems). They were children who were serviced in the self-contained resource classes or in the resource room for more than 25% of their school day.

The questionnaires were summarized and scored by giving two points to each question checked in the "very serious" column and one point to each question checked in the "moderately serious" column. The results for each question were then summed and the questions receiving the highest number of points were chosen as the basic themes for the workshops.

The questions that received the most points were

questions 2, 4 and 7. Questions 1, 3 and 6 were tied for fourth place. It was determined by the researcher that questions 1 and 4, and questions 2 and 7 could be combined into one topic because of their similarities. Therefore the following four topics were selected for the four workshops:

1. "How to Help Your Special Needs Child Make and Keep New Friends and Find More Success in Social Situations"
2. "Helping Parents Understand and Cope With Firm Limit Setting and Behavioral Issues Concerning Their Special Needs Child"
3. "The Loneliness of Parenting a Special Needs Child"
4. "Helping Parents Cope With Feelings of Frustration and Loss of Patience With Their Special Needs Child" (In academic, social and daily living experiences)

The last workshop was, in addition to the planned program, used to pass out a questionnaire assessing all four workshops, and a date was set for a fifth meeting to discuss future workshops and hopefully the continuation of the group under the leadership and management of the parents.

C. Causes of the Problem:

In the past there has been less emphasis placed on the "problem child" in the author's community. Children with anything more than a simple learning problem were, in many cases, sent to a special school out of the district, and the town paid the tuition. There was more

emphasis on educating the bright, college bound child. Passage of State Public Law 766 and Federal Law 94-142, which address education for all children despite their special needs, has directed more attention upon the special needs student. This emphasis has been centered on developing appropriate programs and in mainstreaming special needs children into regualr education. There have even been parent groups for the purpose of advocating special programs and lobbying for legislation for their children. No attention has been given, however, to the problems parents encounter in raising special needs children.

One of the most frustrating experiences shared with the author by parents of these children was the isolation they feel. This isolation has been caused by two main reasons. Even though there are five elementary schools with an average of twenty special needs children in each school, and a middle school with an average of thirty-five special needs students, the opportunity for the parents of special needs children to meet together and discuss common problems has not been provided. Parents have felt this isolation because their child has been one of only twenty special needs students in a building servicing at least two hundred students. Parents have not had a chance to know the parents of these twenty special needs students, as they have ranged

in age from kindergarten to fifth grade. The parents' needs and frustrations would have probably been known, if at all, only to the resource teacher servicing their child.

A second cause of the feelings of isolation felt by the parents of special needs students has come about because of declining enrollment. As classrooms have become available, children who have been serviced in outside placements have been brought back to the local system, and a special education teacher has been hired for these children. It is vastly more cost effective to hire a teacher for an average salary of about $14,000 to teach six to eight children than pay outside placement tuitions of at least $6,000 per child.

These children have been thrust into the mainstream of the public school without the skills to handle additional pressures that are involved in such a change. These children and their parents have become a minority in the public school system, whereas in the outside placement, the children were all special needs children. In that setting, parents had many more opportunities to share mutual problems with other parents.

Another cause of the problem has been the lack of community services to aid the parents. There has been an excellent private counseling center in the town which for several years has sponsored several workshops deal-

ing with selected issues in parenting. Their focus, however, has been on "The Single Parent", "Children of Divorce", "Working Mothers", etc. None have focused on the specific problems of the parents of special needs children.

Still another cause has centered around the rapid growth of the Special Education program in the author's community. When the researcher was first employed by the town in 1978, there were seven special education teachers and four tutors in the department. The special educator often felt isolated. There has been a growth in the department, now employing fifteen special education teachers, six tutors, and eight aides. The system hired a Special Education Director two years ago to organize the department, develop programs, and build staff. Now that the programs have been operating smoothly and the staff has been organized and completed, the new and efficient Administratrix has been running an excellent department with continuity, communication, and good service delivery. Now that the staff has felt support within the department, the next logical step would be to help the parents help themselves and their children.

D. Related Literature

The researcher found a wealth of material dealing with support groups for the parents of special needs

children. It was discovered that these groups were further broken down into three major categories:

1. Support groups with the major emphasis in training the parents to teach some skill to their children, or to conduct some home therapy on their children.
2. Support groups with the major emphasis to lobby for and obtain programs and legislation for their special needs children, and to act as advocates for their children.
3. Support groups with the major emphasis to gain support and parenting skills, and to help in dealing with the emotional problems incurred as parents, and to help their children by developing the skills to be better parents.

The last category was the one which the researcher chose to focus on, though it was the area least represented in the literature. It was the area of greatest need in the researcher's setting, however.

Many important strategies for developing the researcher's program were derived from the literature search.

Stevens (1978) listed some positive guidelines which he felt helped determine the effectiveness of a parent education program. Some pertinent ones follow:

1. Clearly stating the objectives of the program.

2. Developing activities to follow these objectives.
3. Parent consultation and input on what the program should include.
4. Keeping careful records.

Wilson (1979) made some observations concerning the need for such programs and the benefits derived from these support groups. He found they:

1. Facilitated communication between the school and the parents.
2. They helped to remove parents from a defensive posture to a positive partnership with professionals.
3. They encouraged parents to provide a source of manpower for volunteer services.

Adams (1979) conducted a group called "Parents Make the Difference" in the Bronx, New York. Her group had as the central focus teaching parents that their children were not "dumb" or "stupid" just because they had learning problems, but were legitimately handicapped. She found that once the parents developed a better understanding of their child's problem, they became more tolerant of their children's difficulties.

Van Pelt (1979) also contributed some important theories for conducting successful programs. He felt that at least eight families were needed to form a

group, but no more than twenty families. He also felt strongly that both parents should be involved if possible, for continuity in parenting, as well as mutual support. He suggested that lists of objectives for each meeting should be formulated, and a post meeting evaluation form should be utilized to give immediate feedback to the leader and to help plan for future sessions.

Williams (1978) felt that there were more stresses in parenting today and that parents clearly need more information and awareness, more understanding, more support, and more skills with respect to rearing their special needs children. He also found the need for father and mother involvement. He found that parent support groups help parents discover:

1. Many of the things they are doing are right.
2. There is help available and people do care.
3. They have to take some initiative to help themselves help their children.

Darnell (1975) did her project in Boulder, Colorado discovering the benefit of having support groups begin when children are very young. Her group began when the children entered kindergarten, and she found that this early start had three benefits:

1. A child's attitude about school will be different when there is a sense of cooperation between the home and school.

2. Parents will feel more involved.
3. The habit of good communication is established when the child is young and it will continue through the child's school career.

Martinson (1976) had some strong feelings which he utilized at his Parent Training Institute. He deals with the parents of severely handicapped children in Kentucky. He feels that:

1. Small mini-groups or clusters of from three to five families work well with severely handicapped children.
2. These clusters are instructed in the techniques and procedures of behavior modification or management.
3. These clusters help one another in deciding the best appropriate behavior plan for each individual child.
4. These groups result in the development of appropriate behavior, and decelerate inappropriate behavior.
5. Parents should help teach and support other parents.

Though his population was severely handicapped, the principles used in his groups are noteworthy.

In continuing to look at the format for support groups, Wilson (1979) cited a research project meas-

uring the effectiveness of group discussion in influencing parent attitudes. His study had parents meeting for six weeks, and each session had a trained professional give a talk or lecture, or a film was shown focusing on a topic of interest to the parents of special needs children. The parent group then broke down into smaller groups and a discussion of the topic was held. After six weeks was over, the children of the parents who attended the workshops were rated on improved attitude and performance both by teachers and peers. There was an improvement in both areas in the children whose parents had taken part in the program.

Literature has clearly shown that parents working with professionals, working to support one another, in learning to understand, accept and deal with their children's limitations have been an essential key to the children's ultimate success and happiness.

Chapter Three - Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

A. General Goals

This practicum was designed to provide the initial meetings for what hopefully would become an ongoing support group or forum for the parents of special needs children in Marblehead.

It was the hope of the researcher that the initial four meetings would be so useful and informative that the parents would want to explore other topic areas and to maintain the group.

A second goal of the program was to improve communication between the parents and the school. If the parents were initially provided with support from the school system and school personnel, it was hoped that the parents would come to understand what the special education programs were trying to do for their children. Parents would also get to know various members of the special education staff through their various presentations, staff that they might never get to meet in the course of a normal school year. Through these workshops, it was hoped that communication would be improved, and the children would ultimately benefit from this partnership.

A third goal of the program was to familiarize the parents with one another, so that informal support net-

works would be formed within the group.

The researcher felt that from this core group of parents would emerge leadership and that when the initial workshops were over a steering committee would be formed to take over the planning and maintenance of the group. School personnel would then play a less active role and would act more as a resource for the group.

B. Behavior Expected, Assessment Instruments, and Standard of Performance

Each workshop had different expected behavior or goals and had a questionnaire at the end of each evening to assess the success of that workshop (See Appendices K, L, M, and N). A tabulation of 75% positive feedback for all of the questions indicated to the author that the program was successful and meaningful (see charts on the next page).

There was also a questionnaire at the close of the final workshop to assess the complete program to determine whether the general goals of the total program were met (See Appendix O). The results of the individual meeting questionnaires and the overall program questionnaires have been presented in chart form in this final report.

Behavior Expected	Assessment Instrument	Standard of Performance
Workshop #1 - "How To Help Your Child Make and Keep New Friends and Find More Success in Social Situations'	Post Meeting Evaluation Form	When 75% of the questions are answered with a positive reply.

Goals

1. Parents will learn why their child has trouble making and keeping friends.
2. Parents will learn strategies to use in helping their child make friends.
3. Parents will learn strategies to use in helping their child keep friends.
4. Parents will learn strategies to use in helping their child have more success in social situations.

Behavior Expected	Assessment Instrument	Standard of Performance
Workshop #2 - "Helping Parents Understand and Cope with Firm Limit Setting and Behavioral Issues Concerning Their Special Needs Child"	Post Meeting Evaluation Form	When 75% of the questions are answered with a positive reply.

Goals

1. Parents will become acquainted with key terms and theories involving behavior management.
2. Parents will learn strategies for developing and maintaining a positive approach to child management.
3. Parents will be able to recognize appropriate ways of dealing with positive reinforcement of both appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

Behavior Expected	Assessment Instrument	Standard of Performance
Workshop #3 - "The Loneliness of Parenting A Special Needs Child"	Post Meeting Evaluation Form	When 75% of the questions are answered with a positve reply.

Goals

1. Parents will realize they are not alone in parenting a special needs child.
2. Parents will find at least one other parent or resource person they can call or contact when a problem arises with their child.
3. Parents will feel free to bring related topics before the group for discussion.

Behavior Expected	Assessment Instrument	Standard of Performance
Workshop #4 - "Helping Parents Cope With Feelings of Frustration and Loss of Patience With Their Special Needs Child"	Post Meeting Evaluation Form	When 75% of the questions are answered with a positive reply.

Goals

1. Parents will learn strategies to help them cope with frustration and loss of patience when helping their child with academic tasks (e.g., homework).

2. Parents will learn strategies to help them cope with frustration and loss of patience with their child in a social situation.

3. Parents will learn strategies to help them cope with frustration and loss of patience in daily living situations with their child.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Behavior Expected Goals	Assessment Instrument	Standard of Performance
1. Parents should feel that the workshops were helpful to them in parenting their special needs child. 2. Parents should feel that they understand the special needs programs better. 3. Parents should feel that they know some of the special education staff better. 4. Parents should find at least one person with whom to share problems concerning their child in the future. 5. Parents should want to see the series continued.	Overall Survey Form distributed after the fourth workshop.	When between 25% and 50% of those completing the series have positive responses to the Overall Survey (App. G) it will be recommended that the series be continued according to the format of the author. When below 25% of those completing the series have positive feedback and responses to the Overall Survey it will be recommended that the group continue using the informal network that has been established.

Chapter Four - Solution Selected and Implementation

The author decided that the best solution for her setting was to provide the first key steps in the formulation of a support group for local parents of special needs children. The researcher planned and implemented four workshops centered around topics selected from a survey of these parents conducted by the researcher (See Appendix B).

The researcher hoped that if the initial groundwork was done by a special education staff member and if appropriate model programs were provided for the parents, they would not only enjoy and profit from the workshops but also would desire to continue the programs and have models to emulate. The parents also had the support of the school system to get them started. It was hoped that camaraderie would develop among the group during the duration of workshops.

Each workshop offered a guest speaker, a panel of school personnel or parents, or a film presentation. This was followed by a question and answer period and then the attendees were broken down into small discussion groups led by a member of the school staff. At the end of each workshop a brief questionnaire was distributed to assess that evening's workshop.

At the end of the fourth evening, the researcher distributed an additional questionnaire to assess the entire series and to determine if the group wished to continue the

series.

The topics were selected, as noted above, from the questionnaire and the evening's agenda was developed. Permission for their presentations was given to the author by the appropriate administrators in the school department, the Superintendent of Schools, the Director of Special Education, and principals from each school involved in the project.

Funds needed for the film and refreshments were provided by the Special Education Department, and the author's principal donated the use of his school for all meetings. The author's fellow resource teachers and members of the guidance staff volunteered their services as presenters.

Publicity was carried out through notification in the local press and by a personal letter of invitation to the parents of all special needs children in the community, preschool through grade 8 (See Appendices C and D).

There were two deviations from the original proposal. The first involved the actual dates of the program. The first plan was to separate the workshops by about three weeks. Actually the programs were held on four successive weeks and the fifth meeting two weeks later. There were two reasons for this change. The first involved scheduling. The auditorium was available only on Tuesdays, and several Tuesdays were already scheduled for other activities. The author, in consultation with her principal and the school psychologist, also determined that if the workshops were

scheduled as a consecutive series of weekly meetings, the continuity and momentum of the consecutive meetings would be more likely to keep the parents involved and interested. The plan worked; a core group of thirty parents attended all of the workshops.

The second change was implemented after the workshops began. It was decided originally that the format would include small group discussion of the topic of the evening. This strategy was needed and very successful during the first evening; the group was shy and not open to interaction in the large group format. Through the questionnaire completed at the close of the first session and informal conversation with the author, the group expressed its preference to keep the discussion to one large group. The author respected their request and changed the format, which worked very well during the final three workshops.

A fifth meeting brough together nine parents who volunteered to act as a Steering Committee and agreed to plan two additional meetings, one in February and one in April. At this point in the process, the author served as a resource person only in order to effect an orderly transition to the parental group.

Chapter Five - Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

The series of four workshops were well attended (20 to 42 people each evening) and well received as indicated in the evaluation tables that follow. Both the primary and secondary goals of the author were met. The ultimate goal was to develop an ongoing support group and forum for the parents of special needs children in Marblehead, and as a result of the initial workshops two additional programs have been scheduled for February and April by the parents.

Each of the evenings had a similar format. The group met in the auditorium of the author's school, and the atmosphere was purposefully kept informal and comfortable. Coffee and refreshments were available, and the parents were invited to help themselves at any time during the evening. The author always introduced herself, spoke a little about the topic of the evening, and after indicating their backgrounds and roles in the school system introduced the evening's presenter(s).

The series was advertised in the local paper (See Appendix D) both in articles before the series began and by weekly reminders before each meeting. Additionally every parent with a special needs child from pre-school through the 8th grade received a letter/announcement from the author indicating the dates, topics, etc. (See Appendix C). Each evening the parents received a name tag and the evening's

agenda as they entered the auditorium and were greeted (See Appendices E, F, G and H).

At each session the presenter(s) spoke for approximately 45 minutes and then took questions from the audience. It was also planned that the audience would break down into smaller groups for discussion. As the workshops progressed and the group became more familiar with one another, the audience participation increased, so much so that by evening three, which was a panel of parents, the audience was as involved in answering questions and making suggestions as were the presenters. At the close of each evening the author summarized the evening, the presenter's main points, particularly pertinent solutions to problems solved in the open forum sector, gave a brief overview of the next workshop and an invitation to that meeting was extended. At the end of each evening parents were asked to fill out brief questionnaires which assessed the various programs.

An overview of each evening can now be offered as the various goals and concommitant data evolved as the evenings progressed, and the growth of the group and their camaraderie increased and became more evident as each workshop was held.

The first workshop entitled "How To Help Your Child Make and Keep New Friends and Find More Success in Social Situations" drew 12 people. This evening's group had many more mothers than fathers. At first things were somewhat

strained, and it was observed by the author that people generally didn't know one another and were not interacting with one another. The author began the evening as was planned in the format of the workshops, the author introduced herself, welcomed the group, and gave an overview of the evening and the workshops that would follow. The first presenter was a local psychologist who held the position of liaison to the school system from a local counseling center mentioned in Chapter Two. He has done several units each year with the resource teachers in the system, depending on their needs and the needs of the children in their programs. He was familiar with many of the parents in the audience and their children. His discussion emphasized some developmental theories and stages of socialization, what was appropriate within these stages, and how various disabilities could impact these stages. He promulgated the "balance principle", to be nurturing and helpful to the child without smothering them and feeling overly sorry for them because of their disability and handicaps. The speaker was warm, witty, spoke with humor, and generally "warmed up" the audience. The evening was successful overall, as is indicated in the chart.

Table I Results of Workshop #1 - "How to Help Your Child Make and Keep New Friends and Find More Success in Social Situations"

Number in Attendance - 32 People
75% of Number of People in Attendance - 24

Question	Yes	No
1. Do you feel that you have a better understanding and insight into why your child has difficulty in making and keeping new friends.	24	8
2. Did you gain any information or learn any new strategies to use in helping your child make new friends?	28	4
3. Did you gain any new information or learn any new strategies to help your child keep new friends?	29	3
4. Did you gain any new information or learn any new strategies to use in helping your child find more success in social situations?	26	6

5. Did you gain any information or learn any new strategies not listed above to use in helping your child's social life. Comments:

   a. "Realizing that sometimes you should push the child, and sometimes you should comfort him."

   b. "Realizing that there are not always definte guidelines: Balance issue is food for thought."

   c. "Encouraging positive achievement."

   d. "Making one friend is the first step."

   e. "Listening more."

   f. "Mutual support is important."

   g. "My child is young - I learned a lot from parents with older children."

   h. "I need to step back and re-evaluate the situation."

Although the preceding table shows that the evening's goals were met, the question period following the speaker was not as successful as the author had expected. Only two questions were forthcoming from the audience. The group stopped for a coffee break and broke down into three smaller groups, each conducted by a group leader, all resource teachers and colleagues of the author. The groups were assigned two specific tasks by the author: to come up with three anti-social or problem behaviors, and to find a solution either from remarks gleaned from the speaker or from practical experience. The strategy was used with the hope that the group would "open-up" and feel "freer to speak" in the small group. Wilson suggested this strategy in his parent training program. The strategy did work, and people soon were chatting, sharing experiences, etc. The evening closed after the leaders shared each of their problems and solutions with the group as a whole. The evening ended on a positive note with questionnaires cheerfully completed by the attendees.

The second evening was entitled, "Helping Parents Understand and Cope With Firm Limit Setting and Behavioral Issues Concerning Their Special Needs Child". An excellent film called, "Parents and Children", from Research Press at the University of Illinois was selected by the author because it was not made with a clinical or school setting in mind, but with home situations portrayed. The educational "jargon" was

at a minimum, but examples of positive and negative reinforcement were shown and firm limit setting and other prominent techniques used in behavior modification were reenacted. A list of key terms was developed by the author to be given as a handout at the beginning of the evening so that the parents had a visual reminder to refer to as the evening unfolded (See Appendix I). The film and the subsequent question and answer period were well received as is reflected in the following table:

Table II Results of Workshop #2 - "Helping Parents Understand and Cope With Firm Limit Setting and Behavioral Issues Concerning Their Special Needs Child"

Number in Attendance - 20 People
75% of Number of People in Attendance - 15

Question	Yes	No
1. Did you find that you were presented with enough information to understand key terms and theories involving Behavior Management?	18	2
2. Did you find that you were provided with enough information for developing and maintaining a positive approach to child management?	19	1
3. Did you find that you were provided with enough information to recognize appropriate ways of dealing with positive reinforcement of both appropriate and inappropriate behavior?	20	0
4. Did you feel that you were provided with any information other than the above concerning limit setting and behavior management? Comments:		

a. "Really enjoyed the group discussion!"

b. "I liked the large group better than the small groups."

c. "There is comfort on knowing other parents have similar problems and also can offer some solutions."

d. "Practical situations and solutions were great! Loved hearing the whole group together."

This evening attracted 20 people, but the audience as a whole seemed more relaxed and began to chat informally with one another. The author began the evening as she had in the first workshop, by introducing herself, the topic, etc. She determined early in the evening that because of the small number of people and attendee feedback that groups would not be formed, and she asked the group leaders (the same resource teachers as the week before) if they would join her and form a panel for the question and answer section. The questions came very freely, and in several instances the parents in the audience joined the panel in answering queries and in giving strategies. Once again the mini-goals were met, as is demonstrated in the preceding chart, and the author determined that the new format of remaining in one group had worked well. Several parents had commented on this in the first week's questionnaire. The author decided to continue this format for the following two workshops due to the success of Workshop #2, and because she could see the group becoming a more cohesive body.

Despite the ultimate success of Workshop #2, the author encountered two frustrations in presenting this evening. She had planned the dates for the workshops around the school system's "Events Calendar" and around the availability of the auditorium, in order to avoid conflicts with other evening programs in the system. After the calendar had been printed and distributed, one of the largest elementary

schools in town planned an "Open House" on the same evening as Workshop #2. Several of the parents came to view the author's film, but left shortly thereafter to go to the Open House, which brought the number down to 20 attendees.

The second problem centered around the film's arrival. The author had ordered the film four weeks before the workshop and had called to verify the order one week prior to the date to reinforce the importance of the film's timely delivery. As of four o'clock on the afternoon of the workshop there was no film, so the author and the school psychologist frantically prepared a lecture to take the place of the film. At 5:15 P.M. the janitor called the author at home to report that Parcel Post had just delivered the film to the school. The author realized that an alternative plan must be available for the remaining two workshops in case such an event repeated itself, and so alternates were arranged in case the planned guests had to cancel at the last minute.

The first two meetings revolved around concerns about children (behavior, socialization skills, etc.). The last two workshops dealt with the difficulties the parents had in dealing with their children's problems. The author realized that the third evening would deal with more personal, soul bearing concerns and needed very special, sensitive presenters. She determined that parents of special needs children would be the experts in addressing the topic: "The

Loneliness of Parenting A Special Needs Child". The four parents that comprised the panel were selected because of the way they accepted and handled their problems. They were parents who through time, and with a great deal of courage, were managing very well, and who had totally accepted their children's limitations.

There were 38 parents in attendance and as the chart on the next page shows, the evening was a complete success.

Table III Results of Workshop #3 - "The Loneliness of Parenting a Special Needs Child"

Number in Attendance - 38 People
75% of Number of People in Attendance - 28

Question	Yes	No
1. Do you feel less isolated in parenting your special needs child as a result of this meeting?	37	1
2. Did you find at least one other parent or resource person that you could contact in the future to help with a problem concerning your special needs child as a result of this meeting?	37	1
3. Did you discover any strategies to help you deal with your feelings of isolation and loneliness in dealing with your special needs child as a result of this meeting?	37	1

Comments

1. "Thank you! Wonderful!"
2. "Great! Best night yet."
3. "What fantastic parents to model!"
4. "I feel so much better."
5. "Wonderful. Thank you."
6. "Keep going - we need it!"

It was the most poignant evening of all. Many tears were shed and unbelievable honesty about such things as "extended family" not accepting the handicapped child were aired. One woman said to the panelist: "I thought my mother was the only one who couldn't deal with a disturbed grandchild. She blames me for his problems. I have felt like such a failure! I feel so relieved to hear you have the same problem." The attendees continued their discussions beyond 9:00 P.M., the termination time. It was the evening the author believed was the turning point. She thought then and there that the group would continue and that they were becoming a real support to one another. During the coffee break the mother of a five year old handicapped girl made plans with one of the panelists to get their daughters together socially. In the Resource Room the first child had male classmates exclusively and hence had no girl friends with a handicap with whom she could identify.

The fourth and final session featured two guidance counselors who service the elementary schools in the community who addressed the topic "Dealing With Frustration and Lack of Patience With Your Special Needs Child". The crowd was large (42), comprised of husbands and wives, many of whom had been to other meetings and brought their husbands to this final meeting. The audience immediately began socializing which was quite different from the first night when people were much quieter and subdued. Once again the discussion

segment was kept to full audience participation.

There were several noteworthy incidents on this particular evening. The first was the presence of a woman who had been the treasurer of a group that existed in the community for the parents of special needs children several years ago that was formed to advocate for programs. She had contacted the author after the second workshop and had asked to address the group. She and her husband told the group that they had a treasury of $180 that they would like to present to this group if they decided to continue. They paved the way for the author to announce that there would be a fifth meeting for those people who would be interested in seeing the group continue and who would take an active part in the planning of such meetings. This question was also addressed in the fifth questionnaire which was used to assess the workshops as a whole. It was determined that the response was an overwhelming "Yes, the group should continue."

The second incident concerned another example of a parent reaching out to another parent for help. A very attractive, well dressed, affluent woman raised her hand. She was recognized by the author as a prominent interior decorator in town, and the mother of one of her former students, a beautiful, sweet, mildly retarded girl of 12. The child's "slowness" was compounded by some emotional factors which stemmed from peer acceptance. The mother, with tears in her eyes, said: "I have a frustration. Tomorrow is my

daughter's 13th birthday. I told her she could invite three friends into Boston for lunch and a stage show. I suddenly realized that she didn't even have one friend to invite. I felt so sorry for her. All of her friends in elementary school have matured and outgrown her. What can I do? She feels so alone, and so do I."

The panel and the audience suggested several alternatives. Get her into dancing class, sports activities, have her make friends with younger children, etc. They were good suggestions, but the woman's pain was still evident, and her current problem still remained. At the coffee break a woman who had attended all four workshops walked up to the mother, and they began to talk. Within several minutes they were embracing. The girl's mother came to the author at the end of the evening and recounted what had happened. The second woman had a daughter a year younger than the first woman's, with a similar profile. The girls had been in nursery school together for a short time several years before. She suggested that they take the girls to Boston for that lunch and show the next weekend, and they would celebrate the birthday and perhaps rekindle a friendship. The author was deeply moved and couldn't help but think that the success of the program was becoming evident.

The entire evening was highly successful as shown in the following chart:

Table IV Results of Workshop #4 - "How to Deal With Frustration and Lack of Patience When Dealing With My Special Needs Child"

Number in Attendance - 42 People
75% of Number in Attendance - 32

Question	Yes	No
1. Did you find that you were provided with enough information or strategies to help you deal with feelings of frustration or loss of patience when working on academic subjects with your child (including homework)?	36	6
2. Did you feel that you were provided with information or strategies to help you deal with feelings of frustration or loss of patience in dealing with your child in social situations?	42	0
3. Did you find that you were provided with information or strategies to help you deal with feelings of frustration or loss of patience in dealing with your child in daily living situations?	38	4
4. Did you find that you were provided with any information or strategies in areas other than those listed above that will help you cope with feelings of frustration or loss of patience with your special needs child?	42	0

Comments

1. "Yes. Tantrums and friendship."
2. "Friendship and loneliness."
3. "Well presented meeting!"
4. "Good handouts."

The evening ended on a positve note.

The overall assessment of the program completed by the attendees substantiated the conclusion that each of the objectives of this series of workshops were met (See Appendix J). The comments on this questionnaire were especially gratifying to the author (See Table V). Even if the objectives of the program had not been met, the feelings of these six parents would have made all the author's efforts rewarding and satisfying. As it was, the comments were a bonus to her. The table follows:

Table V Overall Assessment

Number in Attendance - 36 People
75% of the Number in Attendance - 27
50% of the Number in Attendance - 18
25% of the Number in Attendance - 9

Question	Yes	No
1. Do you feel the workshops were helpful to you in parenting your special needs child?	36	0
2. Do you feel you understand the Special Education program in Marblehead better as a result of the workshops?	28	8
3. Do you feel you have come to know some of the Special Education staff better as a result of the workshops?	28	8
4. Have you found one person or persons with whom you could share problems in the future as a result of these workshops?	30	6
5. If there are more workshops held in the spring would you serve on a committee to plan one of them?	15	21

Comments

1. "Thank you. We needed this!"
2. "Please don't stop!"
3. "Thanks. It was great!"
4. "I'm sorry the four weeks are over. It was so helpful!"
5. "Great."
6. "Super, Jo-Anne. Thank you."

The author made a request of the group as a whole on evening four. She asked if those wishing to see the group continue would remain for a few minutes to set up a meeting date. No one person left the hall. A date was decided upon, and the author requested that anyone wishing to help plan future meetings attend the fifth meeting in order to set up a Steering Committee.

The fifth meeting was held, and nine people arrived ready to take an active part in the planning. The participants decided to hold two meetings, one in February and one in April. They wanted the first meeting to address general issues such as "What is 766?" (The Massachusetts Special Education Law); "What Can Parents Expect From Staff in the Schools?"; "What is The Role of Specific Staff, e.g. the School Psychologist, Kinesiologist, Occupational Therapist, etc.?"; and "What Outside Agencies Are Available?"

The Special Education Director promised to attend and address the group during the February meeting. It was also decided that the second meeting in April would utilize the newly acquired funds in paying for a speaker, an expert in some area of Special Education. One suggestion was to invite a neurologist to address the topic "Left Brain/Right Brain". The author, the school psychologist, and two additional resource teachers, as well as the Special Education Director made the commitment to the group to act as resource people as long as they were needed.

The charts clearly show that the goals of each individual workshop were met. The general goals were also met. First and foremost the parents wanted to continue the support group. A second major goal was to improve communications between the parents and the school by meeting staff members from other schools, and this was also accomplished. The third goal having parents reach out to one another was also met. The incidents that were described in the narrative speak to this goal as well as the general comraderie felt during each individual workshop. The growth of the group was evident. The results of the final questionnaire highlighted this information as well.

The following suggestions would be recommended for anyone who would undertake a series of parent workshops similar to the ones just completed by the author:

1. Enlist the aid of superiors (both financial and emotional).
2. Enlist the volunteer services of fellow professionals and department members.
3. Be prepared to be a "super" salesperson, to believe in the program and be able to transmit this enthusiasm to others.
4. Be able to make changes in the format of the original design according to the needs of the group.
5. Be willing to return the favor of support to your colleagues when they have projects.

6. Be sensitive to volatile or emotionally charged issues in the program.
7. Be organized. All the little details have to be handled by the director of the program. One small slip can ruin a well planned program. (e.g., What if the film doesn't come in time or a speaker cancels out at the last minute?)

The author was very pleased with the outcome of the workshops and felt that they filled a need shared by the parents of special needs children everywhere. She would like to see her outcome shared with professionals and parents that deal with special needs children. Her report will be made available to her fellow cluster members, Special Education colleagues in her community, to the parent attendees, to school system administrators, and School Committee members.

The author would also like to see the information shared with a larger audience, via ERIC and SPIF. She also plans to submit the report to the MACLD (Massachusetts Association for Children With Learning Disabilities) for one of their workshop presentations at their annual convention. The author is also planning to make her report available to several faculty members at a local college who teach courses in Special Education, so they can share the results with their students who are teachers or prospective teachers.

REFERENCE LIST

Adams, Ruth. Children with learning problems: a developmental view for parents. Journal of Learning Disabilities, May 1978, 35-37.

Darnell, Deane. Personalized kindergarten programs with supplementary parent involvement. Boulder, Colorado, June 1975. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED-116-791)

Martinson, M. C. Parent training institute for the severely handicapped. Report read at the University of Kentucky, April 1976. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 189-285)

Preston, J. B. Simulation workshops for parents: evoking empathetic responses. Academic Therapy, September 1979, 5-7.

Stevens, Joseph H. Parent education programs: what determines effectiveness. Young Children, May 1978, 59-65.

Towle, Maxine. Organizing parent groups. Journal of Learning Disabilities, March 1980, 165-168.

Van Pelt, Jeff. A manual for peer support and personal growth: group for parents with children who are developmentally delayed or disabled. Virginia Beach, Virginia, 1981. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED-209-846)

Williams, David. Assessing program relevance in changing family structures. Los Angeles, California, April 1978. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED-204-008)

Wilson, Wade. Parent training: some observations. Academic Therapy, September 1979, 45-49.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PERIODICALS:

Adams, Ruth. Children with learning problems: a developmental view for parents. Journal of Learning Disabilities, May 1979.

Bullington, Becky P. Working with families of multihandicapped children in a residential institution. Children Today, September-October 1976.

Preston, J. B. Simulation workshops for parents: evoking empathetic responses. Academic Therapy, September 1979.

Rettberg, Don. Infants in need - an insight on parenting. Education Unlimited, February 1980.

Stevens, Joseph H. Parent education programs: what determines effectiveness. Young Children, May 1978.

Stevens, Joseph H. Support systems for black families. Childhood Education, March-April 1981.

Towle, Maxine. Organizing parent groups. Journal of Learning Disabilities, March 1980.

Wilson, Wade. Parent training: some observations. Academic Therapy, September 1979.

ERIC DOCUMENT REPRODUCTION SERVICE:

Darnell, Deane. Personalized kindergarten programs with supplementary parent involvement. Boulder, Colorado, June 1975.

Fine, Jo R. Three year evaluation of "Project Mainstream". Paper presented at the annual meeting of The American Educational Research Association, April 1977.

Martinson, M. C. Parent training institute for the severely handicapped. Report read at the University of Kentucky, April 1970.

Powell, Douglas R. A social interaction approach to parent education: an overview of the child and family neighborhood program. Kellogg Foundation Report, Battle Creek, Michigan, June 1979.

Van Pelt, Jeff. A manual for peer support and personal growth group for parents with children who are developmentally delayed or disabled. Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Williams, David. Assessing program relevance in changing family structures. Los Angeles, California, April 1978.

Appendix

Marblehead Public Schools

2 HUMPHREY STREET • MARBLEHEAD, MASS. 01945 • (617)631-0900

School Committee:— JOHN E. ORMISTON, Jr., Chairman
MARCIA L. SWEENEY, Secretary
CAROL H. TWADELL, Vice-Chairman
DEXTER D. BUCKLIN
PAUL B. WARREN

June 15, 1982

Dear Parents,

I would like your input in helping me to identify some topics that could be the basis for some workshops in the fall. They would be focused around children involved in resource room programs or other special programs at the elementary and middle schools.

Parents are frequently telling me about some of the difficulties they experience. I would like to find out how other Marblehead parents feel about these areas in order to determine to what extent parents experience common problems.

Would you take five minutes right now to fill out the enclosed survey and provide me with some of your thoughts and beliefs as they pertain to your child. Two copies are enclosed in case each parent would like to complete a survey.

A return envelope is enclosed for your convenience so that you can send me your completed sheets by June 25th. Your complete confidentiality will be respected.

I appreciate your time and candid answers.

Sincerely,

(Mrs.) Jo-Anne Murphy
Resource Teacher
Coffin School
631-0900 ext. 162-163

Name_____

(optional)

As a parent of a child involved in a resource room program or other special program how serious are the following problem areas for you?

Problem Area	Very Serious	Moderately Serious	Seldom Serious	Never Serious
1. Setting firm limits or disciplining your child.				
2. Helping your child with homework becomes a hassle.				
3. Having your child make and keep new friends.				
4. Controlling your child's behavior. (e.g. fighting, temper tantrums etc.)				
5. Availability of adequate day care facilities when school is not in session. (After school, summers)				
6. The loneliness of parenting a child with school problems.				
7. Losing patience or becoming easily frustrated with your child.				
8. Wondering about your child's acceptance in the neighborhood, or community activities.(Scouts, sports groups, church groups).				
9. Sibling problems or jealousies. (Do brothers or sisters feel you spend too much time and attention on the child having problems)				
10. Feelings about being part of a resource room program.(Does your child feel stigmatized, ashamed, relieved, proud)				

1. List any problem areas not covered on page 1.

A. _____

_____

B. _____

_____

C. _____

_____

2. Now list the top four priorities from pages 1 and 2.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

3. Where will your child be in September? Elementary School ☐ Middle School ☐

4. Would you or any adult members in your home be interested in attending a series of evening workshops in the fall addressing the above issues?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Comment _____

_____

_____

Marblehead Public Schools

2 HUMPHREY STREET • MARBLEHEAD, MASS. 01945 • (617)631-0900

School Committee:— JOHN E. ORMISTON, Jr., Chairman CAROL H. TWADELL, Vice-Chairman
MARCIA L. SWEENEY, Secretary DEXTER D. BUCKLIN PAUL B. WARREN

October 1, 1982

Dear Parents,

As a consequence of our survey last June we have some very exciting news to share with you!

In response to your expressed needs we will be offering a series of workshops on four successive Tuesday evenings beginning on October 12th. Topics you wished to be addressed include:

"Helping your special needs child make and keep new friends and find more success in social situations"

"Helping parents understand and cope with firm limit setting and behavioral issues concerning their special needs child"

"The loneliness of parenting a special needs child"

"Helping parents cope with feelings of frustration and loss of patience with their special needs child"
(In areas of academics, social situations and daily living)

Each session will last one and one half to two hours and will begin at 7 P.M. The program will be held in the auditorium of the Coffin School on Turner Road.

Following each presentation there will be a question and answer period and a discussion portion of the program. Staff from the Special Education and Guidance departments, teachers and parents will be participating in the workshops. Refreshments will be served.

Any questions concerning the program may be answered by contacting me at the Coffin School, 631-0900 ext. 162-163.

We are hoping to see you on the following dates!

Tuesday October 12th
Tuesday October 19th
Tuesday October 26th
Tuesday November 2nd

Sincerely,

Jo-Anne Murphy

(Mrs.) Jo-Anne Murphy
Resource Teacher
Coffin School

Salem Daily News October 1, 1982

Workshop series planned for special needs children

MARBLEHEAD — A series of workshops dealing with the needs of parents of special needs children will be held by the education and guidance staffs of the School Department on Tuesdays, Oct. 12, 19, 26 and Nov. 2 at 7 p.m. in the auditorium of the Coffin School.

Subjects discussed will be helping the special needs child make and keep new friends and find more success in social situations; helping parents understand and cope with the firm limit-setting behavioral issues concerning the special needs child; the loneliness of being a parent of a special needs child; and helping parents cope with the feeling of frustration and loss of patience with their special needs child.

Anyone desiring additional information can contact Mrs. Jo-Anne Murphy at the Coffin School.

Swampscott/Marblehead Reporter Week of October 4th

Special needs is series topic

Swampscott residents are invited to participate in a series of four evening workshops addressing the particular needs and concerns involved in parenting special needs children to be conducted by the special education and guidance staffs of the Marblehead Public Schools.

The first workshop, on Oct. 12, will be followed by meetings on Oct. 19 and 26 and Nov. 2 at the Coffin School auditorium on Turner Road in Marblehead. The workshops will begin at 7 p.m. and refreshments will be served.

Topics to be addressed will include helping your special needs child make and keep new friends and find more success in social situations, helping parents understand and cope with firm limit-setting and behavioral issues concerning their special needs child, the lonliness of parenting a special needs child and helping parents cope with the feelings of frustration and loss of patience with their special needs child.

Further information on the programs may be obtained by contacting Jo-Anne Murphy at the Coffin School, 631-0000, ext. 182 or 163.

AGENDA FOR WORKSHOP NUMBER ONE

"Helping Your Child Find More Success in Social Situations"
Making and Keeping New Friends, etc.

7:00 Welcome - Jo-Anne Murphy, Workshop Leader

Introduction of Dr. Joel Ziff

7:45 Question and Answer Period

8:00 Breaking down into small groups with Workshop Leaders Mrs. Chris Martin, Mrs. Kathy Carson, and Mrs. Chris Rubino

8:30 Wrap Up

Please help yourself to coffee and refreshments at any time during the evening!

AGENDA FOR WORKSHOP NUMBER TWO

"Helping Parents Understand and Cope With Firm Limit Setting and Behavioral Issues Concerning Their Special Needs Child"

7:00	Film - "Parents and Children"
7:30	Announcements, Comments, and Question and Answer Period
7:45 to 8:00	Coffee
8:00	Small groups with group leaders Mrs. Chris Martin, Mrs. Kathy Carson, and Mrs. Chris Rubino
8:30	Wrap Up

Please help yourself to coffee and refreshments at any time during the evening!

AGENDA FOR WORKSHOP NUMBER THREE

"The Loneliness of Parenting a Special Needs Child"

7:00 Welcome - Jo-Anne Murphy, Workshop Leader

Introduction of Panel of Parents

7:45 Question and Answer Period

8:00 Coffee

8:15 Breaking down into small groups with Workshop Leaders Mrs. Janice Carbo, Mrs. Barbara Morin, and Dr. David Messinger

8:45 Wrap Up

Please help yourself to coffee and refreshments at any time during the evening!

AGENDA FOR WORKSHOP NUMBER FOUR

"Helping Parents Cope With Feelings of Frustration and Loss of Patience With Their Special Needs Child"

7:00 Welcome - Jo-Anne Murphy, Workshop Leader

Introduction of Panel - Mrs. Nora Chiet and Mrs. Lynn Halperin

Question and Answer Period

8:00 Coffee

8:30 Will the group continue?

Please help yourself to coffee and refreshments during the evening at any time!

KEY TERMS IN BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION

1. Consequences - The primary way you can help your child learn to live a happy healthy life is to teach him/her that there are <u>good</u> consequences for appropriate behaviors and bad consequences for inappropriate behaviors. Consequences can be either rewards, punishments, or nothing (ignoring).

2. Rewards - Behaviors which are followed by rewards tend to increase in frequency. Remember the following principles concerning the delivery of rewards:

   a. Immediacy - the reward follows behavior immediately to have maximum effect.

   b. Intermittent - it is sufficient to reward on an intermittent basis those behaviors which it is not practical to reward consistently.

   c. <u>Ask</u> children what they like - good way to choose reward. (Often time with you is a favorite.)

   d. Grandman's rule - use an activity children like as reward as doing a task they don't like.

   e. Control your own emotions - you cannot shape good behavior by anger or yelling. Shape it over time with rewards.

3. Punishment - Physical punishment (e.g. spanking) avoided as much as possible because it has certain side effects - even though it seems to work in the long run.

   Side Effects -

   a. Child learns to dislike or avoid person dispensing punishment and the kinds of situations where punishment is dispensed (e.g. family outings).

   b. Excessive use of punishment may produce a person who is authoritarian, conforming, and dependent as opposed to a person who is sensitive, creative, and enterprising.

   Time Out and logical consequences can be used for inappropriate behaviors in place of physical punishment to avoid the above problems.

Time Out - removal from rewarding situation for a specific length of time (e.g. have child stand in corner, go to room absent of any toys).

Logical Consequences - punishing in the sense of being unpleasant but the idea is they follow logically from the misbehavior and are therefore seen by the child as incurred by himself - not inflicted by you (e.g. child breaks window - make him pay for it).

4. Ignoring Inappropriate Behavior - many bad behaviors (tantrums) will disappear by ignoring them. The absence of your attention - the behaviors are no longer being rewarded.

   Important - you must be resolved to control yourself and wait the child out when ignoring inappropriate behavior, as it can get worse before it gets better.

5. Structuring a Task - often a child fails to do what you ask simply because he or she doesn't know how or doesn't comprehend exactly what you are asking. You can avoid this by following these techniques:

   a. Break tasks into small tasks, presented in a logical sequence from beginning to end.

   b. Provide verbal cues or physical assistance when needed.

   c. Provide verbal assurance and praise after each step or several steps.

School Soundings Thursday December 8th 1982

Support group is formed for parents

A support group for parents has been formed following a series of four workshops devoted to the particular problems encountered in parenting special needs children held in October under the direction of Coffin resource teacher Jo-Anne Murphy.

Topics addressed during the sessions included "Helping your Special Needs Child Make and Keep New Friends;" "Dealing With Limit Setting and Behavioral Issues;" "The Loneliness of Parenting a Special Needs Child;" and "How to Deal with Loss of Patience and Frustration in Dealing With Your Special Needs Child."

Joining Mrs. Murphy for the workshops were guidance staff members Dr. David Messinger, Nora Chiet and Lynn Halperin and special education department members Kathy Carson, Beth Cohen, Chris Martin and Chris Rubino. Dr. Joel Ziff of the Marblehead Counseling Center also served as a discussion leader.

The workshops were so well received that the group plans to continue and meetings will be planned for February and April. Parents of special needs children who are interested in participating in future meetings are urged to contact Mrs. Murphy at Coffin School.

SURVEY FOR WORKSHOP #1

"How to Help Your Child Make and Keep New Friends and Find More Success in Social Situations"

Would you answer the following questions as honestly as possible?

1. Do you feel that you have a better understanding and insight into why your child has difficulty in making and keeping new friends?

   Yes No
   Comments:

2. Did you gain any information or learn any new strategies to use in helping your child make new friends?

   Yes No
   Comments:

3. Did you gain any information or learn any new strategies to use in helping your child keep new friends?

   Yes No
   Comments:

4. Did you gain any information or learn any new strategies to use in helping your child find more success in social situations?

   Yes No
   Comments:

5. Did you gain any information or learn any new strategies not listed above to use in helping your child's social life?

SURVEY FOR WORKSHOP #2

"Helping Parents Understand and Cope With Firm Limit Setting and Behavioral Issues Concerning Their Special Needs Child"

Would you answer the following questions as honestly as possible:

1. Did you find that you were presented with enough information to understand key terms and theories involving Behavior Management?

   Yes No

   Comments:

2. Did you find that you were provided with enough information for developing and maintaining a positive approach to child management?

   Yes No

   Comments:

3. Did you find that you were provided with enough information to recognize appropriate ways of dealing with positive reinforcement of both appropriate and inappropriate behaviors?

   Yes No

   Comments:

4. Did you feel that you were provided with any information other than the above concerning limit setting or behavior management?

SURVEY FOR WORKSHOP #3

"The Loneliness of Parenting a Special Needs Child"

Would you answer the following questions as honestly as possible:

1. Do you feel less isolated in parenting your special needs child as a result of this meeting?

   Yes No

   Comments:

2. Did you find at least one other parent or resource person that you could contact in the future to help with a problem concerning your special needs child as a result of this meeting?

   Yes No

   Comments:

3. Did you discover any strategies to help you deal with your feelings of isolation and loneliness in dealing with your special needs child as a result of this meeting?

   Yes No

   Comments:

SURVEY FOR WORKSHOP #4

"Helping Parents Cope With feelings of Frustrations and Loss of Patience With Their Special Needs Child"

Would you answer the following questions as honestly as possible:

1. Did you find that you were provided with information or strategies to help you deal with feelings of frustration or loss of patience when working on academic subjects with your child? (including homework)

   Yes No
   Comments:

2. Did you find that you were provided with information or strategies to help you deal with feelings of frustration or loss of patience in dealing with your child in social situations?

   Yes No
   Comments:

3. Did you find that you were provided with information or strategies to help you deal with feelings of frustration or loss of patience in dealing with your child in daily living situations?

   Yes No
   Comments:

4. Did you find that you were provided with any information or strategies in areas other than those listed above that will help you cope with feelings of frustration or loss of patience with your special needs child?

OVERALL SURVEY

Would you answer the following questions as honestly as possible:

I attended the following workshops:

Workshop #1 "How to Help Your Child Make and Keep New Friends and Find More Success in Social Situations"

Workshop #2 "Helping Parents Understand and Cope With Firm Limit Setting and Behavioral Issues Concerning Their Special Needs Child"

Workshop#3 "The Loneliness of Parenting a Special Needs Child"

Workshop #4 "Helping Parents Cope With Feelings of Frustrations and Loss of Patience With Their Special Needs Child"

1. Do you feel the workshops were helpful to you in parenting your special needs child?

   Yes No

   Comments:

2. Do you feel you understand the Special Education program in Marblehead better as a result of the workshops?

   Yes No

   Comments:

3. Do you feel you have come to know some of the Special Education staff better as a result of the workshops?

   Yes No

   Comments:

4. Have you found one person or person with whom you could share problems in the future as a result of these workshops?

   Yes No

   Comments:

5. If there are more workshops held in the spring would you serve on a committee to plan one of them?

   Yes No

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kathy Carson
Nora Chiet
Beth Cohen
Lynn Halperin
Chris Martin
David Messinger
Barbara Morin
Chris Rubino

FROM: Jo-Anne Murphy

RE: Workshops for the Parents of Special Needs Children

- -

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support, expertise and time during the series of workshops just completed for the parents of Special Needs Students. What started out to be a project for my doctoral work turned out to be such an exciting, rewarding and fulfilling experience!

The success of the programs was due largely to the participation of so many of the Special Education and Guidance Staff. Your contribution was greatly appreciated by the parents, and certainly by me. You may not know that a fifth meeting was held at which time a Steering Committee was formed comprised of several parents to take over the operation and planning of future meeting. Two additional meetings, one to be held in February and one in April are already in the planning stages.

Our goal was met, this much needed support group will continue!

I feel most fortunate working with such a talented and caring staff of professionals, and feel even more fortunate to have you as my friends.

Thank You!
Jo-Anne

cc: Dr. James Kent
Mr. George Dhionis
Mrs. Janice Carbo
Mr. Terrence J. Boylan
Mr. Henry Dembowski
Mr. Robert Farrell
Ms. Marjorie Goolsby

Marblehead Public Schools

2 HUMPHREY STREET MARBLEHEAD, MASS. 01945 (617)631-0900

DR. JAMES KENT, Superintendent of Schools

School Committee:— DEXTER D. BUCKLIN, Chairman; PAUL B. WARREN, Vice-Chairman; MARCIA L. SWEENEY, Secretary; R. CRAIG McGARVEY; PAULINE L. HOWES

January 21, 1983

Mrs. Joanne Murphy
25 Lexington Circle
Swampscott, MA 01907

Dear Joanne:

The reason for this personal note is to commend you for the outstanding series of Parent Workshops you conducted for Parents of Children with Special Needs. This program, which you personally developed, was beautifully organized and presented.

In my four years here in Marblehead, numerous efforts had been made to formulate an active, interested and supportive parents' advisory council for parents of special needs children. These efforts, however, did not breed the success that I and the special education department had hoped to achieve. You, however, achieved this goal. I attribute your success, which of course, we now all share - thanks to you, to your unequalled committment to handicapped children and their families.

Too often, unfortunately, parent workshops lose or lack the personal warmth and nurturance parents need as they learn and live with their children. Your workshops, Joanne, were a beautiful exception. The series was informative, had the right degree of depth and intensity, and most of all were sensitive and sincere. I am sure you realize the many objectives you achieved in those four evening sessions. However, I would like to elaborate on some of them.

- You inspired in the parents a sense of identity, a sense of belonging, and created a working parent support group.
- You addressed the everyday issues parents of special needs children must face and deal with-often alone and without help. But now they no longer remain alone, and have learned that help is there and they know where to locate it.
- You meshed the often distinct roles of teachers, counselors, and parents into a cohesive working unit that can further enhance the wholistic development and growth of the children.

- and above all, Joanne, for us in the department, you broadened our horizons, our awareness, and recharged our enthusiasm in our continual, and sometimes waring efforts to improve the quality of life and learning for our very special children.

Very truly yours,

Janice A. Carbo

Janice A. Carbo
Administrator of Special Education

JAC/s